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THE

CHRISTIAN LAW

OF

UNION IN COMMUNION.

Rev. J. S. ...
BY GEO. W. SAMSON, D.D.

PHILADELPHIA:
THE AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY,
1420 CHESTNUT STREET.



THE
CHRISTIAN LAW
OF
UNION IN COMMUNION

A VITAL ISSUE IN

EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE,

AND AN ESSENTIAL SAFEGUARD TO

AMERICAN BAPTIST UNITY.

BY GEO. W. SAMSON, D.D.

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THE CHRISTIAN LAW OF UNION IN COMMUNION.

CRISIS IN THE DISCUSSION.

WHEN, more than forty years ago, the exciting debate in the United States Senate which threatened national disruption had for many days wandered from the point at issue till passion was stirred by sectional antagonisms, Daniel Webster commenced his comprehensive appeal, which led to union during another generation, by comparing the disputants to mariners who had lost their reckoning in a storm, and he brought all minds to centre on the real point in debate and to realize the hazard of continued controversy by the simple request, "I call for the reading of the resolution."

In this masterly stroke of policy the great American statesman but followed the example of an equally eminent English orator. When,

sixty years before the American debate, the Parliament of Great Britain had become involved in a heated controversy as to taxation of the American colonists, Edmund Burke, in the opening of that speech which set in array the dangers which threatened colonial independence, called for the preamble of the resolution before the House. That preamble began: "Whereas it is *expedient* that a revenue should be raised in America," etc. Ringing the changes on the word "expedient," and demanding why the framer had not written the word *right* instead of "expedient," this greatest of English statesmen, penetrating to the future age of modern thought, intimated that no longer could political policy be allowed to triumph over moral principle, and expediency to take the place of right.

Called to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," Christian advocates may well learn from able statesmen; for as Jesus taught, "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." It may be that in the controversy as to an important ordinance of Christ a well-meant suggestion of *expediency* has thrown into the shade a principle of *right* established by divine law. It may prove that, though a ma-

majority in our mother-land have yielded in mistaken charity a principle hallowed by universal Christian faith and practice, American Christians will hold faithfully that truth which alone can promote Christian grace.

RESULTS OF DISCUSSION IN THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE.

The late conference of Evangelical Christians of different denominations and nationalities, held in New York, has hastened to a crisis questions in discussion as to union and communion. Papers read and addresses made by representative men brought out in strong contrast the divergence of view which may result from a generous impulse that overlooks principles universally recognized in Christian history. Without question, the great gathering of the Evangelical Alliance has intensified the desire for co-operation in Christian work. Its immediate result, however, has led in the Episcopal Church to an increased disposition to nonconformity rather than uniformity. In the Congregational Church, the authority of General Councils has been successfully controverted. In the Presbyterian Church, Christian co-operation, as distinct from organic union, is now sought. Discussions in all evangelical churches since the Alliance

have turned on the issue of union and communion, this being a natural result of that conference.

Dr. Hodge of Princeton in his paper entitled "Faith in Christ the only requisite to Christian Union," confounding spiritual with formal communion, declared: "No church has a right to demand more for Christian union and communion than Christ demands to enter heaven." On the other hand, the Rev. Mr. Marston of London, giving a complete analysis of New Testament allusions to the doctrine of "The Communion of Saints," as stated in the Apostles' Creed, showed that the gospel requires unity in Christian spirit rather than in church organization—a view which the dean of Canterbury aptly illustrated in the relation of the Church of England to the various denominational bodies. Dr. Muhlenberg found few to second his suggestion that occasional union communion services would prove a source of Christian unity.

The individual invitations given during the conference to attend union communion services, and the acceptance of the invitations by two or three out of the hundreds who were present, representing different churches, have led to protests from churches whence remonstrance was least expected, and have called forth in many quar-

ters a reconsideration of the generally recognized requisites for admission to the Lord's Supper.

THE SPIRIT DEVELOPED IN THE COMMUNION CONTROVERSY.

The persistent effort to draw a portion of the membership of Baptist churches into affiliation with the Free-will Baptist churches of New England, or with the open-communion Baptists of England, calls for a careful notice of the spirit which is developed by controversy. If, under the old dispensation, "mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace kissed each other," assuredly, in Christ's church, the grace of charity and fidelity to truth need not conflict. But may not the agitation of mind amid late discussions have developed the spirit often produced amid political conflicts? Have the disputants appreciated at all times the conscientiousness of their opponents? Has not the proneness to personal rivalry sometimes overcome sincere love of the truth? May it not be that the great end of all Christian discussion, the advancement of Christ's kingdom, has been too much lost sight of? And may it not be found that therefore the comprehensiveness of divine truth and the perfection of divine grace have not been fully realized?

MISSION OF BAPTISTS AMONG EVANGELICAL
CHRISTIANS.

Christians of the Baptist denomination have always had, as their distinct mission, to strive for the entire separation of the church from the world. This has called forth three successive efforts. The first was the dissolution of the union between church and state, in which aim all American Christians have come to agree. The second has been the separation of a regenerate from an unregenerate membership by guarding baptism, first in its subjects, and second in its form; the latter of which two efforts all Asiatic and European Christians have recognized as valid, while the former is most appreciated by American Christians, because associated with the theory of a state-church. Their third mission is to guard Christ's second ordinance from the perversions which have arisen as to the first ordinance. This their high calling, to bring back Christians everywhere to the original design of the Lord's Supper as associated with baptism, is worthy of special consideration.

THE AIM OF THE PRESENT REVIEW.

Now that the first heat of controversy has subsided, aided by the after-thought which has followed the late excitement, it may be timely to

need the apostolic exhortations, "Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule," and "Follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." If we desire that the communion question or any other topic may be so discussed as to lead to truth, and its harmony be preserved, the order of survey belonging to all successful search for truth must be preserved. In the first place, the sources of evidence must be sought; then the progress of opinions in the history of the church, as confirming just views, should be traced; next the special views and their advocacy which have introduced modern controversy must be examined; and lastly, the practical difficulties which have grown out of this controversy may be solved.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE AS TO THE LAW OF COMMUNION.

All evangelical Christians agree in the general statement that the teaching of Christ and of his inspired apostles in the New Testament is the ultimate source of appeal in all questions of Christian doctrine and duty. It may be overlooked, however, in this general statement that two subsidiary principles are here involved which demand special consideration in seeking

the law of Christian communion. Christ taught by example as well as by precept; and, yet more, he has left each human mind dependent on its own powers in judging as to the meaning of his words, and as to the obligations imposed by his acts. There are therefore three sources of Christian knowledge by which we may determine the law of admission to the Lord's table; first, New Testament statements; second, apostolic practice; third, the history of Christian opinion.

It is natural and right that the Christian in deciding any duty should seek a "Thus saith the Lord." It may, however, be forgotten that God speaks as truly in his works as in his word, and that the *act* of Christ may be quite as authoritative as his *command*. In fact, special commands for the performance of acts, either bodily or mental, cannot always be rightly understood unless the acts which are enjoined have been beforehand witnessed or be so illustrated as to be comprehended.

Yet further, the historic fact, that an ordinance was practiced by the apostles and has continued from their day, is a convincing as well as legitimate proof of its divine authority. In regard to such ordinance, however, it should be remembered that no custom of any body claiming to be Christ's church is of any validity simply

because it can plead antiquity, while it has no ground in the teachings of divine wisdom.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT AS TO THE REQUISITES FOR ADMISSION TO THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The ordinance of baptism was appointed by divine direction in the opening ministry of John, Christ's forerunner, as is seen in his expression, "He that sent me to baptize," etc. The ordinance of the Supper was instituted four years later, subsequent to Christ's ministry of three and one-half years, which was preceded six months by John's baptism. The ordinance of baptism is then antecedent in *time* to the Supper. At the institution of the Supper only the twelve apostles and no other believers were present. The reason of this was not, however, as Romanists aver, that its full observance by partaking of the cup is restricted to clergymen; since ever after all church members, as at Jerusalem and Corinth, partook of the Supper in common. That the apostles had been baptized before partaking of the Supper is confirmed by a chain of evidence the most positive conceivable. John baptized all who received his teaching and on profession of repentance and of faith in the Christ to come. Some, at least, of

the twelve were John's disciples. Again, after John left Bethabara for Enon, Christ's disciples baptized more disciples than had John, and it is inconceivable that they had neglected a duty which they required of others. The question as to the relation of John's baptism to that of Christ's disciples both before and after the institution of the Supper will be considered in noticing Robert Hall's inconclusive argument. It is important here to note that only a mind predisposed to avoid the laws by which truth is reached could suggest that Christ's disciples partook of the Supper before receiving baptism.

In his commission which was to guide his ministers Christ intimates an order of observance which in every trying era has been referred to by Christian leaders seeking to arrest corrupting error. Thus Jerome in the fourth century, Alcuinus in the eighth, and Calvin and Luther in the sixteenth centuries, as Archbishop Whately in the nineteenth century, urged the fact that Christ bound his ministers, *first* to make disciples, *second* to baptize them, *third* to teach them all other duties commanded, including that of the Supper. Throughout the entire history of the apostles, believers were baptized immediately on profession of their faith in Christ, which pre-

cludes of course the idea that the Lord's Supper could have been first observed.

And here human reason, which instinctively seeks a natural connection in God's appointments, remarks that baptism, once only observed and the sign of the beginning of spiritual life in Christ, must of course precede the Lord's Supper, which is repeatedly observed as the symbol of growth in grace and of continued dependence.

OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER IN EARLY CHRISTIAN AGES.

The testimonies which establish the custom of the early churches as to baptism and the Lord's Supper in the ages succeeding the apostles are to be gathered from such writers as Irenæus and Origen in the second century, Tertullian in the third century, Cyprian and Jerome in the fourth, Augustine and others in the fifth century. They are in part brought together by such historians as Gieseler and such archæologists as Coleman; and they can be substantiated by any student of early Christian literature. They all accord in the following testimony: The earnest aim of faithful Christian teachers in the early ages was first to lead men to genuine repentance and faith in Christ, and

to this end the gospel was preached to all, while persevering catechetical instruction was given to children and youth. Baptism was administered (except in cases of threatening death) only to those who professed faith in Christ. Even in the times of the apostles, however, the influence of early Jewish and heathen, Asiatic and Grecian religious convictions, led to a very common impression that the external ordinances, appointed by Christ only as symbols of spiritual change, had in themselves the efficacy ascribed to the rites taught to them from childhood—an impression against which Christian missionaries in all ages have been obliged to guard. This error the apostles Paul and Peter sought in their Epistles to correct, as Christian teachers in all ages have observed. This popular impression has always, however, betrayed both weak and worldly Christian ministers into a yielding to the eager appeal of half-enlightened minds that Christ's ordinances be administered to persons not intelligent believers. Hence baptism came to be administered to those in peril of death, to infants, to the insane and idiotic, and even to dead bodies; and since, in the case of the sick, baptism could not be administered by immersion, aspersion, or the sprinkling of the entire body, was resorted to.

Universally the Lord's Supper, and that in both elements, was administered to all baptized believers, and to none others unless to those whose baptism was also exceptional. How very carefully invitations to the Lord's Supper were guarded, is indicated in the so-called "Apostolic Constitutions," and in allusions recorded in the works of many early Christian writers. Moreover, in marked consistency, the elements of the Supper in both kinds were administered to the baptized sick, to the insane, and to infants, under the common impression that it possessed a saving efficacy, the Lord's Supper always succeeding to baptism.

About the fifth century the Western or Roman Church distinguished between baptism once administered and the Lord's Supper repeatedly given, so far as catechumens were concerned. From that time catechetical instruction, which in the early ages was made to precede both baptism and the Lord's Supper in the case of children and youth, was carefully introduced prior to their first communion. This order of the ordinances has virtually been regarded in all Protestant churches, the infants baptized not being admitted to the Lord's Supper until mature in years and educated in the tenets of their ancestral faith. The Eastern Church, on the

contrary, including the Greek and its associate Asiatic and African branches, and also the Russian Church, make the second ordinance immediately to follow the first. The infant brought to the church is first plunged three times beneath the water in the font; it is then taken out, dressed, and brought back to the church, when a bit of wafer saturated with wine is placed by a spoon in the infant's mouth. Not an instance in history appears wherein the order of the two ordinances has not been preserved. It is only among the modern Baptists of England, guided by such leaders as Robert Hall, that the natural, the scriptural, and the historical order of baptism and the Supper has been set aside.

TEACHING AND PRACTICE OF THE PROTESTANT AND REFORMED CHURCHES AS TO ADMISSION TO THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The names Protestant and Reformed have been given to those who in modern times have separated from the Roman Church, protesting against its errors and seeking to reform them. Among all these churches infant baptism has been retained, but infant communion has been discarded. Baptists, neither protesting nor reforming, have simply maintained adherence to New Testament precedents. The statements of

leading authorities as to the views and practice of Protestant churches so generally represented in the American States is an instructive confirmation of the history just considered. Calvin and his more comprehensive theological successor, Turretine, while sustaining at length infant baptism against the Anabaptists, repeat the testimony of the Fathers that catechetical instruction, although it do not precede baptism, must be given before admission to the communion. The German Reformers, while differing as to the expediency of retaining infant baptism, made admission to the Supper the privilege of only mature and professed believers who had received baptism. Dwight, the leader in New England theology, states as "indispensable qualifications" for admission to the Lord's Supper, that the candidate "should be a person of piety, that he should have made a public confession of religion, and that he should have been baptized." In this statement Dr. Woods of Andover accords, referring to it as the teaching of all the Reformers.

The views and practice of several leading denominations in America as to admission to the Lord's table have been recently brought together by Dr. A. Alex. Hodge in his "Outlines of Theology;" among which the following are note-

worthy. The Assembly's rules prescribe: "Children born within the pale of the visible church, and dedicated to God in baptism, when they come to years of discretion, if they be free from scandal, appear sober and steady, and to have sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's body, they ought to be informed it is their duty and privilege to come to the Lord's Supper." Again, Dr. Hodge states: "The Baptist churches, denying altogether the right of infant church membership, receive all applicants for the communion as from the world, and therefore demand *positive* evidences of the new birth of all. All the Pædobaptist churches, maintaining that all children baptized in infancy are already members of the church, distinguish between the admission of the children of the church to the communion and the admission *de novo* to the church of the unbaptized alien from the world."

It is apparent from this statement of Dr. Hodge that any Pædobaptist church may come to have a majority of unrenewed members, and that even its officers may be men unacquainted with saving regeneration. That this is not only a possible but a natural result is verified in the history of the churches founded by the great Reformers in Switzerland, Germany, England, Scotland, and in New England. It is equally

worthy of note that the candor of Dr. Hodge leads him to place the Baptists in their true position. Nothing is said of any difference between Baptist and Pædobaptist churches in prescribing both baptism and church membership as prerequisites for admission to the Lord's Supper; for as to this order of requirements there is no difference. The Baptists, on the other hand, as Dr. Hodge tacitly admits, stand as guardians of the Lord's table from communicants who do not give "*positive* evidences of the new birth."

BAPTIST VIEW OF ADMISSION TO THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The Baptists, so far as infant baptism is concerned, are virtually successors to the so-called Anabaptists, who along the Alps—both in Italy and in Switzerland—and in Germany, maintained that the only Christian baptism is an immersion administered on profession of personal faith in Christ, and who were called by their opponents Anabaptists, or rebaptizers, as though they baptized again persons admitted to their churches. They only baptized those who had not received a real Christian baptism before.

Baptists, in their mode of baptism, are as truly successors to the Eastern Church, occupying half Europe, Northern and Western Asia, and

Northern and Central Africa, who retain immersion as the form of baptism prescribed in the Greek word employed by the inspired writers and preserved in Greek liturgies. Baptists, in fact, so far as the first ordinance of Christ's church is concerned, are the faithful representatives, as all able ecclesiastical historians admit, of the primitive church in its early ages.

Baptist views of the Lord's Supper, when clearly stated, as also their practice, are equally true to the early and also to the later history of the Christian church. Believing, with all other Christian denominations, that the two ordinances appointed by Christ must be observed in the order stated by him in his commission, Baptists hold in harmony with each other these two principles: *first*, the express teaching of the New Testament is the ultimate authority both as to the design and order of baptism and the Supper; but *second*, the interpretation of the New Testament records is left by God's appointment to the conscience and judgment of each Christian believer. Applying these two principles to the question of admission to the Lord's Supper, two distinct duties manifestly arise: *first*, to *invite* any others than baptized believers—members of churches of baptized believers—would be a violation of the law of Christ held by Christians in

all ages; and *second*, to forbid any company of persons who are satisfied with their own baptism and fitness for church fellowship from uniting in churches and carrying out their own conscientious convictions in regard to the Lord's Supper, would be equally a violation of Christ's law of individual responsibility. To the legitimacy of these conclusions no consistent mind can fail to give its assent. As to its united justice and charity, no pious heart can take exception.

THE PRINCIPLE OF UNRESTRICTED COMMUNION ADVOCATED BY ROBERT HALL AND OTHERS IN MODERN TIMES.

Robert Hall in the preface to his "Terms of Communion" reveals the secret that it was *misguided sensibility*, rather than conscientious views of truth, which prompted him to a practice opposed to all Christian precedent. He says: "There is no position in the whole compass of theology of the truth of which he [the writer] feels a stronger persuasion than that no man or set of men are entitled to prescribe as an indispensable condition of communion what the New Testament has not enjoined as a condition of salvation." Passing by the apparent unhinging of mind which betrayed this model of classic English into the use of "or" for *nor*

and of "are" for *is*, the failure in logical discrimination is worthy of careful consideration, since it is the clue to the same failure throughout his treatise. It is the error betrayed by Dr. Hodge when he urged before the Evangelical Alliance that "no church has a right to demand more for Christian union and communion than Christ demands to enter heaven." Mr. Hall excludes one ordinance of Christ, baptism, as not a "condition of salvation," yet tacitly assumes that another ordinance, the communion, is, if not a condition, yet virtually an essential, to salvation. So Dr. Hodge, alike unconsciously, assumes 'a third external duty, church union, as essential, while baptism is unessential. If we examine the Scriptures, we find that baptism, communion, and church union are all duties manifestly required by Christ. The question at issue, however, is not how far either of these is essential to salvation, but whether there is a natural and necessary order for their observance prescribed by Christ.

While Mr. Hall thus shows that lack of careful thought so essential in the search for truth, his misguided sensibility finds frank utterance in these added statements: "The writer is persuaded that a departure from this principle in the denomination to which he belongs has been

extremely injurious, not only to the credit and prosperity of that particular body, but to the general interests of truth. . . . By keeping themselves in a state of separation and seclusion from other Christians they have not only evinced an inattention to some of the most important injunctions of Scripture, but have raised up an invincible barrier to the propagation of their sentiments beyond the precincts of their own party." How manifest that in Mr. Hall's mind the wish has become father to the thought—that, led by the generous desire not to seem to cultivated minds a bigot, and to be truly charitable toward Christian brethren not holding his views of baptism, he has been betrayed into the admission of a principle which they could not accept, even though it permitted union in communion! for no Pædobaptist church can accept the view that baptism is not a prerequisite to the Lord's Supper, nor could it join Mr. Hall in the invitation of unbaptized communicants.

The following remark indicates yet further the inconsistency of Hall's views. He says: "The true idea of Christian communion indicated in the expression the 'communion of saints' is by no means confined to a joint participation of the Lord's Supper. When it is

used in connection with that rite (1 Cor. x. 16), it is employed, not to denote the fellowship of Christians, but the spiritual participation of the body and blood of Christ." Had Mr. Hall, like the Rev. Mr. Marston in his address to the Evangelical Alliance, analyzed all the New Testament allusions to the "fellowship," or "communion," of saints, he would have remarked that this doctrine, so far from being "confined to," has never any direct reference to "joint participation of, the Lord's Supper." In manifest inconsistency, however, both with this statement and the "latitudinarian" view he professes to controvert, Mr. Hall urges: "We should meet at the Lord's table with those with whom we feel ourselves at liberty to join in every other branch of religious worship;" yet he blames Mr. Robinson as "latitudinarian" in admitting "all professed Christians" to the Lord's Supper, since "the general practice of the Christian world makes baptism an indispensable requisite to the Lord's table." This needless failure to harmonize in principle, not only with Baptists, but with all his Christian brethren, which Mr. Hall experienced, was not by any means peculiar to him; we shall see it to be the lot of all modern advocates of unrestricted communion.

After this preface, Mr. Hall, in the body of his treatise, gives his principal effort to the argument that John's baptism was not Christian baptism. He thus seeks to show that Christ's apostles were not in the Christian sense baptized when they received the Supper, and that therefore Christian baptism is not to be regarded an indispensable requisite to the Lord's Supper. It is worthy of special notice that Mr. Hall does not attempt to show that any one converted after Christ's resurrection was received to the Supper prior to baptism. This of itself indicates that his argument, even if sustained, does not support his conclusion. His argument is substantially the following:

Christ's commission prescribing the form of baptism was given after his resurrection. To this plea it is a sufficient reply that the commission consists of three parts, the first and third of which had the same import before as after Christ's resurrection, whence the presumption is that the import of the intervening command is unchanged. Again, Hall argues that the formula of baptism, "In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," was not given until after the institution of the Supper. The statement is but an opinion at best of Mr. Hall, and, still more, a supposition

at variance both with John's teaching and with Christ's connected commands. If the command to "make disciples" and to "teach all things" *before* taught them were but repetitions of previous injunctions, who is able to say that the formula of baptism was not one previously prescribed? That this was virtually the formula of baptism used by John is manifest from the fact that all whom he baptized were required both to confess their sins and to believe on him to come, who should baptize them with the Holy Ghost. Again, Mr. Hall urges that John's baptism was that of "repentance" rather than of faith. Two vital objections exist to this view. It is in violation of the universal teaching of the Old and the New Testaments that all men redeemed before Christ came, believed in the Saviour to come and were renewed by the Holy Spirit. Yet more, what mind can conceive of a repentance that is genuine unassociated with faith in the divine Redeemer? If Mr. Hall's argument proves anything, it proves too much for his purpose, since it shows that not only were Christ's apostles destitute of Christian baptism, but also of spiritual renewal and of saving redemption, when they received the Supper. Still again, Hall urges that baptism after Christ's commission was "superior" to that of John. In this

view he supposes Chrysostom to agree, his own prototype of rhetorical rather than logical statement. Chrysostom's remark, however, is to this effect—that the spiritual influence attending baptism as well as preaching after Christ's death was greater than before. This view of Chrysostom is both scriptural and logical. Before Christ's death Christ's expiatory sacrifice could not be fully appreciated nor the Holy Spirit's application of it be completely realized; and of course baptism, which embodied the idea of Christ's death and resurrection as a cause, and of the believer's death to sin and resurrection to spiritual life as the effect, could not be so vivid a symbol before as after Christ's commission.

Mr. Hall thinks that his theoretic views, just considered, are sustained by apostolic example in the case of rebaptism at Ephesus. He overlooks, while dwelling on the isolated expression, "John's baptism," the plain intimation found in the connection of the narrative. Apollos, preaching at Ephesus, had misunderstood what John taught—that baptism was the sign of new life received from Christ, who should baptize with the Holy Spirit. This ignorance was instructed by Aquilla and Priscilla; and thereupon Apollos left Ephesus and sailed for Corinth. Paul, com-

ing thereupon to Ephesus, assures those baptized under the influence of these imperfect teachings that John's baptism implied belief in Christ and reception of the Holy Ghost; whereupon they were baptized "in the name" not only of the Holy Spirit, but also "of the Lord Jesus." If Hall's view were correct, then we should have expected the record that Christ's chosen twelve, also the one hundred and twenty at Jerusalem, and again the five hundred in Galilee, were re-baptized.

Whether Hall's view be correct or not, the incident proves that the apostle Paul did not regard baptism valid or a title to admission to the church and to its ordinances, unless it had been received in every respect according to Christ's appointment. Had he studied the *history* of the interpretation he so heedlessly advocates, down to the time when it was made an article of faith by the Council of Trent, he would have shrunk from alliance with a principle maintained by the advocates of ritual and hierarchial salvation as opposed to the spiritual truth maintained by the Reformers. The Romanists, in order to weaken popular confidence in the Reformers, had contended that baptism by administrators not in the line of apostolic succession was invalid. The Reformers maintained that Christian bap-

tism was ordained under John's ministry, that Christ received it, and that otherwise the gospel dispensation has not Christ but the apostles as its head. Their most scholarly exponent, Turretine, argues, therefore, from Acts xix. 1-5, that John's baptism supposed in those who received it the same faith implied in the formula of baptism given by Christ to the apostles. Going further than the text justified, in order to meet the Anabaptists—who regarded infant baptism invalid, and therefore rebaptized adult believers and justified it by Paul's act—Turretine contended that ver. 5 is Luke's statement of John's act rather than of Paul's. This interpretation Hall could not of course receive, since it made Luke directly to assert that John baptized "in the name of the Lord Jesus." Modern scholarship, as represented alike by Conybeare and Hackett, agrees in the interpretation which makes ver. 5 Luke's statement as to Paul's rebaptism of the twelve disciples; while it also agrees that ver. 4 implies that John's baptism was Christian baptism.

INCONSISTENCY OF HALL'S VIEW WITH SPIRITUAL CHRISTIANITY.

The history above traced indicates that evangelical sentiment in all ages has recognized

both regeneration and baptism as prerequisite to admission to the Lord's Supper. Hall's view, that the neglect of baptism is no bar to communion, makes also the absence of regeneration no exception in the invitation to the Supper. Dr. Hodge perceives and avows that the Baptists make this special discrimination, Baptists requiring, as the Assembly's rule does not, positive evidence of spiritual renewal as prerequisite to communion. Mr. Hall's proposed invitation includes all members of the churches of England, Scotland, and Germany, and of churches in America modeled after their precedents. The theory of Hall, therefore, in principle as well as in fact, avows that *both* the requisites for admission to the Lord's Supper, universally recognized in Christian history, may be set aside. The Greek Church justifies infant communion only on the ground that regeneration is affected in baptism; the Episcopal and other churches which have grown out of state establishments seek positive evidence of regeneration before communion only so far as they deny baptismal regeneration; and the so-called open-communion Baptist stands entirely alone in the history of the church as a virtual advocate for admission to the Lord's Supper of persons neither regenerated nor baptized.

INJUSTICE TO OTHER CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS IN THE APPLICATION OF HALL'S PRINCIPLE.

In the open-communion Baptist churches of England, such as Spurgeon's, motives of curiosity and supposed liberality lead many to leave their own churches and flock to the communion service at the Tabernacle. It is not strange that the pastors of surrounding churches should feel aggrieved. The ministerial discourtesy is palpable, as would be apparent were the surrounding churches of the same faith and order. The injustice to the members of the churches thus depleted at their communion service is equally apparent, as would appear were Mr. Spurgeon's church the one whose members were enticed from their duty. The injury to individual Christians who accept such invitations is soon revealed; for of all demoralizing practices, neglect of church communion is one of the most corrupting.

INCONGRUITY IN CHURCH MEMBERSHIP GROWING OUT OF HALL'S VIEW.

Incongruity in organization is one of the best tests of inconsistency in principle, since its outward manifestation strikes even the superficial

observer. Some open-communion Baptists, as Spurgeon, contend that baptism by immersion, and on profession of faith, is prerequisite to church membership, though not to communion. Others, as Dr. Landells, regard this as inconsistent, and receive members of Pædobaptist churches to private membership, but deny to them official position, since the church officer must be an "example in all things." Yet a third class, as Dr. Brock, deeming the last-mentioned view also inconsistent, admit avowed adherents of Pædobaptist churches to the position of office-bearers in their churches. In addition to the injustice thus shown to those admitted only to partial membership, every mind must recognize the incongruity in the organization of churches thus composed. That incongruity is threefold: first, in the relation of the members to each other; second, in the fellowship of sister churches with each other; and third, in the co-operation of other denominations with such churches.

PERVERSION OF THE END SOUGHT IN INVITATIONS TO THE LORD'S SUPPER INDUCED BY HALL'S PRINCIPLE.

It is illustrative of the necessary partial views to which every human mind is subject that we may consider for hours what principle

should govern invitations to the Lord's Supper, and never once ask ourselves, "Why give any invitation at all?" The members of each church, who alone ordinarily are present at a communion service, need no invitation. It is a rare exception that a church member absent from home is present with another church on communion occasions. Invitations to baptism are carefully guarded; in general, they are only appropriate in the place of one's residence. The Lord's Supper is equally sacred, and as carefully to be guarded.

The utter perversion of the very idea of invitations to the Lord's Supper strikes a thoughtful American of any Christian denomination when he meets the safeguard thrown around the table by open-communion Baptists in England. He hears the apparently indiscriminate invitation given at the Tabernacle. On repairing to the chapel where the Supper is observed, what is his surprise to be asked for his "ticket"! He reflects, and concludes that no minister or church dare make the approach to the Lord's table indiscriminate and unguarded. The unrestricted invitation it is found necessary to restrict to persons known by the church officers as members of evangelical churches. The *admission* is thus limited to members of neighboring churches, who ought to be elsewhere, and the unknown Baptist

visitor far from his home is excluded. Surely that principle is wrong which leads to such results.

MISTAKEN VIEWS OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY
WHICH PROMPT INCONSISTENT INVITATIONS
TO THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Attended, as the departure from scriptural principles as to the Lord's Supper always is, with such inconsistency and injustice, the inquiry naturally arises, Why has it so misled men of generous sensibilities? We have but to recall the kindred departure from Christ's law as to baptism in order to appreciate this tendency of a liberal spirit. When men and women accustomed to regard external rites as saving implore the Christian minister to administer baptism to their loved ones, it is hard for a good man to be at once faithful and kind in meeting his duty. A similar struggle arises in the breast of a sincere Christian pastor when urged to depart from Christ's law in the administration of the Lord's Supper. Mistaken charity is the more likely to gain control in his mind because his fidelity cannot be fully appreciated, while his charity will be lauded. Such charity is a mistaken one, since true love to the souls for whom Christ died requires that he do nothing to encourage a false reliance for salvation.

INCONSISTENCY AS TO THE LORD'S SUPPER LEADS TO INCONSISTENCY AS TO BAPTISM.

The relation between unrestricted communion and unrestricted baptism is not a mere supposed connection. True principles may be reached before experiment by observing the evidences which attest them; but false principles are both detected and confirmed by the course to which their adherents find themselves compelled. It requires but a few months' experience to make the practical advocate of unrestricted communion, first an apologist for those who receive and administer unscriptural baptism, and then a sharer with them. The mind that wanders at all from the straight path is insensibly led to a departure very different from that at first proposed.

INCONSISTENCY AS TO ORDINANCES LEADS TO GENERAL DEPARTURE FROM CHRISTIAN CONSISTENCY.

It is instructive to observe that a false reliance on external ordinances, and a consequent neglect of their law, leads to a general undervaluing of spiritual truth taught in the gospel. This was observed by Paul among the Galatians, and was forcibly expressed in this figure: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." The

experience of churches other than Baptist as to inter-church communion is specially instructive. A series of occurrences since the conference of the Evangelical Alliance indicates how widely extended is the conviction that indiscriminate inter-communion has an influence most disorganizing on established churches. Immediately after that conference some leaders in the Episcopal Church, who despaired of securing any modification of its liturgy as to "baptismal regeneration," determined to organize the Reformed Episcopal Church. Inasmuch as participation with Presbyterians in the communion service was held to be infidelity to their church obligation, the expectation was sanguine that many among the advocates of inter-church communion would be co-operators in the new organization. To this end Presbyterian clergymen were invited to officiate in the pulpits of the new church. Thoughtful leaders soon saw the practical working of the inconsistent theory as to the communion. It was but the prelude to the breaking up of churches holding like faith, and the forming of an indefinite number of new organizations holding a different creed.

A few months passed. The voice of those who condemned the dean of Canterbury and his *evangelical* advocates for inter-church com-

munion as disorganizers was still echoing through England and America when another note of remonstrance was heard. It was that of high-churchmen condemning the *unevangelical* Dean Stanley. "We have had enough," said these conservative churchmen, "of these broad church utterances; their results are only demoralization and disorganization." And so the very leaders in the advocacy of inter-church communion are now guarding their flocks from its wooing call. It is the old experience of "counsels for other families not to be adopted in one's own household." This vital fact leads us back to another principle established in the gospel.

BAPTISM AND COMMUNION DESIGNED BY CHRIST TO BE CHURCH ORDINANCES.

The same divine wisdom which ordained the spiritual religion of Christ appointed as his agent for its perpetuation the Christian church. Vain is it for any man or body of men to argue that they can be Christians and do Christ's work without church organization. As Amos Kendall, when, after years of delay, at the age of seventy-five, he united with the Christian church, declared: "To refuse to unite with the Christian church is a *standing protest against Jesus Christ's plans.*" When it is stated that a

church is "a voluntary association" and an "independent body," it may be forgotten that no man is *voluntary* and no church *independent* as to Christ and his command. He requires every follower to unite with his church and co-operate with others in maintaining his ordinances and in doing his work. Those ordinances are baptism and the Supper.

The number required to constitute a church is not fixed. There must, however, be enough to maintain his ministry. He has separated his people into churches as society is separated into families, the primitive "church in the house" illustrating this principle. Each church is to have its administrators and ordinances, and all its members are to make the family table their constant gathering-place. The common conscience as to this truth is read in the scrupulous fidelity to church obligations enjoined and observed when two churches of the same denomination are found in the same neighborhood. The inviting of members of sister churches to inter-communion is nothing else than a violation of family propriety. Traced to its origin, this instinctive and ruling conviction is but the utterance of Christ's law written on the heart.

The question often arises whether the authority to administer Christian ordinances vests in a

church or in its minister. It is simply the question whether the ruler or the people constitutes the state, since a Christian minister, like a civil ruler, is nothing but the appointed organ of the body for which he acts. Men may be called to assume either civil or religious authority when acting alone which they could not assume with and for others. When Philip baptized the eunuch, Roger Williams his deacon, and Dr. Sears Mr. Oncken, the circumstances justified their individual act. Ordinarily, however, a Christian pastor, like a civil ruler, acts only as the organ of others. Any other view leads necessarily to the Romanist view that the priesthood, not the people, constitute the church, which alone has authority from Christ to observe his ordinances. The Lord's Supper administered in a sick-room is not only a departure from the law of its appointment as a church ordinance, but, like clinic or sick-bed baptism, it encourages in the receiver a false trust. Nothing but the subtle fallacy which has led to departure from Christ's law of admission to the Lord's Supper could have given countenance to so vital an error.

RELATION OF SISTER CHURCHES TO EACH OTHER AS REGARDS THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Led on by the logic of his thought, Dr. Hodge,

when arguing that "only faith in Christ" is prerequisite to communion, was led to declare, "A man who was a member of the church at Jerusalem was also a member of the church at Antioch and at Rome." The inquiry, then, is natural, why were "letters of commendation" from church to church given in the apostles' day, and why in every age of the church down to our times has the same custom prevailed? Certainly Dr. Hodge's suggestion was an essential part of his theory, and certainly that theory must be questionable which fails to notice so wide a field of facts.

It is manifest that each church in the relationship of its own members is a distinct family; this special relationship is a virtual separation from membership in another family. It is equally manifest that as families form communities, and have relations and duties outside of the family, so is it with churches. In Paul's day the churches of Judea, of Galatia, of Macedonia, and of Achaia were associated in neighborhoods, and these neighborhoods again combined in one Christian body. In that association churches were "independent," inasmuch as they were controlled by the mind and will of Christ directly, and only indirectly by their associates. This relation of churches to each

other is not, however, designed to supersede the sphere of the church, whose union provides for prayer, preaching, and the observance of the ordinances. Union meetings for prayer, praise, and mutual instruction may be occasionally profitable, but soon they are found to interfere with rather than promote church services. The *ordinances*, however, are only designed for individual churches; they are to be observed only at fixed times; they are to be administered by officers specially ordained; and, as Christ's example shows, are distinct from other services in which any person may engage and which any Christian may conduct. Inter-communion is appropriate, according to scriptural and historical precedent, not for churches as such, but for individuals, and that in exceptional cases. Communion as well as baptism is appropriate only at one's home, though the repeated observance of the former as compared with the single observance of the latter makes an exceptional communion a more frequent occurrence than an exceptional baptism. Union communion is an impossibility; for though at first the disciples at Jerusalem were "all together in one place," yet when shortly "three thousand," then "five thousand," then "multitudes," were "added to the Lord," worship and ordinances began to

be observed "from house to house," so that a church became a family, churches united only for co-operation, counsel, and division of labor in fulfilling Christ's commission, "Go preach my gospel to every creature." The suggestion made to the Evangelical Alliance by good Dr. Muhlenberg, that a union communion by representatives of different churches would prove the unity of Christ's church, met few respondents, because it was not sustained by New Testament precedent or historic sanction or manifest utility.

FIDELITY TO CHRIST'S LAW OF UNION IN COMMUNION SECURES FELLOWSHIP AMONG CHURCH MEMBERS.

Human minds differ in thought and feeling, and are made incapable of the close intimacy belonging to family relationship. Families are united by special congenialities between the members. It is so with churches, for two or more of the same faith and order grow up side by side, their members pass each other on their way to their places of worship every week, yet they may never sit together at the Lord's table. It is well that so general attention has been lately called to the Greek word occurring so often in the Epistles of Paul and of John, usually translated "fellowship," though in the Epistle to

the Corinthians rendered "communion." There is a *common nature* in the members of a family, which is not to be expected in society at large. Spiritual renewal plants the *germ* of a common nature in all renewed minds, but on earth "differences" in "the members" of the body and gradual growth in each member forbid immediate and complete congeniality, whose final perfection alone justifies the designation "fellowship." Fidelity to Christ's law preserves the *integrity* of this "fellowship," which Christ designed to be the cement in each of his churches. Indiscriminate inter-communion, like the Communist theory, may prove a *counterfeit*, an unreal fellowship. The application of Christ's maxim, "By their fruits ye shall know them," certainly gives this intimation. Like socialist communities, these loose communions are soon found to harbor men of selfish nature who make the association but minister to their ends. Fidelity to Christ's law at the Lord's table is as essential as in other table companionships.

FIDELITY TO CHRIST'S LAW OF COMMUNION FOSTERS HARMONY BETWEEN DIFFERENT CHURCHES.

Churches of the same faith and order must, like the apostolic churches, unite for Christian

usefulness. Not only was there a general combination of all the early churches; there were also groupings of churches associated by national and other secular affinities in the apostolic times—an example now in force. As the churches of Judea, of Galatia, of Macedonia, and of Achaia were distinct, and even in some respects rival, associations, so is it now with those bearing the names of German Lutheran, Dutch Reformed, Scotch Presbyterian, and New England Congregational. Churches also differ in their views of truth. All these differences are probably overruled for the securing of the greatest comprehensiveness in labors for the defence of Christ's truth and the extension of Christ's cause. The same apostle who wrote most as to the oneness of Christ's church recognized most fully the existence of varieties in the membership, and with this in view declared, "Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule." Unless churches are agreed in their views of doctrine and practice, how can they walk together?

In this association of different churches, however, the "fellowship," or "communion," which unites them is, as Robert Hall recognized, not interchange in the observance of ordinances. The end of association among churches is the

accomplishment of Christian labor distinct from the special duties of individual churches. The introduction of matters belonging only to a church mars the efficiency of such associations.

FIDELITY TO CHRIST'S LAW OF COMMUNION GIVES BAPTISTS THEIR TRUE MISSION.

The variety of views arising in great degree from the different constitution of human minds has given origin to the varied denominations of evangelical Christians, which are sometimes said to have different missions; hence we are often told of the special mission of leading denominations, such as the Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Methodist, as conservators of order in worship, studiousness in doctrine, and earnestness in labor. The Baptists certainly have a very important mission in preserving, by faithfulness to Christ's laws, the purity and spirituality of church ordinances. Their views and spirit, however, in fulfilling this mission are naturally very frequently misconstrued.

All Christians virtually agree in regarding both regeneration and baptism as prerequisite to the Lord's Supper. Good men differ as to regeneration, some supposing it to be effected in baptism, yet allowing that it is a spiritual change. Good men also differ as to baptism, many regard-

ing the change both as to mode and subject which gained such wide acceptance in mediæval times to be unessential. Candid and clear thinkers, like Dr. Hodge, allow that Baptists maintain scriptural views of both regeneration and of baptism. The only question is how Baptists should regard views of baptism and regeneration held by those who have departed from what they believe to be the law of Christ.

It should be distinctly observed that no consistent Baptist claims to be his brother's judge. Every conscientious believer in his own regeneration and baptism ought to go to the Lord's table. No one, however, can ask that another endorse a baptism which he does not regard as scriptural, for this would make one man the judge for another. Every thoughtful mind must see that there can be no other consistent rule of duty than that which harmonizes fidelity to individual conscience and Christian charity for all believers in Christ.

All must admit that communion, like baptism, is a church ordinance; that only necessary absence justifies communion out of one's church; that change of residence requires change of church membership; that the necessity for invitations to the Lord's Supper relates only to an occasional and temporary visiting communicant;

that no invitation can be consistently given except to those agreeing in their views of baptism, which all Christians recognize as pre-requisite to communion, and that no visitor can legitimately expect or accept an invitation but from those who regard his baptism as scriptural. The rarest conceivable case, then, of apparent exception to Christ's law of union in communion above considered is that of a church member absent from home and meeting with a church of another denomination than his own. The application of Christ's law to this rare case is the only one in question.

Since law has no exception, the gospel rule for such cases must be apparent on its mere statement. If the visitor is with a church in accord with him in its views of baptism, as is the case with the various denominations of Pædobaptists, he may either defer his privilege or enjoy it at his own option. If, on the other hand, the visitor is with a church that does not regard his baptism as scriptural, he is in the condition of one meeting fellow-Christians with whom he may enjoy religious worship, but not engage in church ordinances. How different the actual case of difficulty is from that often

supposed in discussions as to requisites for communion, every lover of Christ's truth and grace ought carefully to consider.

FIDELITY TO CHRIST'S LAW OF COMMUNION
PROMOTES CO-OPERATION AMONG ALL
EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS.

The end of the Evangelical Alliance is that secured in the primitive church when 'virtually Paul was president and Luke secretary of the universal alliance of all Christ's early followers. The mission of such an organization, designed to make the church one in Christian influence upon the world, has been, and still may be, mistaken.

Two kinds of unity exist, the one resulting from external force, the other from internal energy; the one that of the rock pressed into cohesion, the other that of the plant drawing the elements around into a living organism. Among men in political relations there is the unity of despotism compelling by bayonets, and the unity of a republic uniting by its utility. In the history of the church the former, though struggling for the mastery, has always failed. Even the Roman Church—republican in all its brotherhoods except that of the Jesuits, and in all its councils except that which declared the pope infallible head—is revolting from the despotic

idea. Christ taught to his disciples, "The kingdom of God is within you;" and to the Roman governor, asking as to his authority, he declared: "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." The only tie that can bind Christians in alliance is love for the truth and a yearning for the grace which in Christ were "full" and perfect.

The chief criticism passed by the secular press on the late meeting of the Evangelical Alliance was the only apparent but not real display of secular titles and worldly distinctions that sometimes appeared in its appointments. The main fear expressed by its thoughtful supporters was the apprehension that the temporary outflow of like views and kindred feeling might not result in permanent co-operation for the advancement of Christ's kingdom. The only circumstance that to any mind seemed to threaten the integrity of its organization was the unofficial invitation to a union communion, whose consequences have proved so instructive.

FIDELITY TO CHRIST'S LAW THE HARBINGER OF CHRISTIAN UNITY.

As no two men can have a common body, though they may have a common spirit, so the church will be one when not unattainable bodily

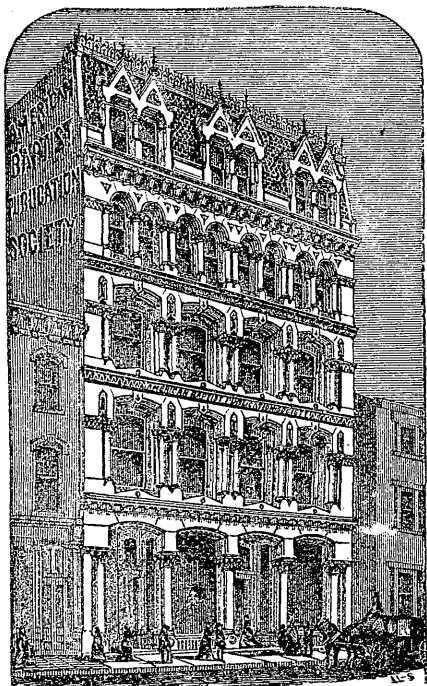
50 THE LAW OF UNION IN COMMUNION.

union, but attainable spiritual communion, is sought. By common consent the assembled delegates of the Evangelical Alliance—representatives of evangelical churches of every name and nation—echoed in their intercourse with each other the manifest distinction between unity and uniformity; the one of which the divine Redeemer enjoined, the other of which the divine Creator has made impossible. Differences of views and practice seem to multiply rather than decrease the formal divisions now occurring in every denomination, as every thoughtful observer of the progress of evangelical Christianity in Germany, France, Great Britain, and the United States must be convinced. That there is a growing unity of views as to the essential doctrines of grace, and even as to the nature and efficacy of church ordinances, is so palpably manifest that no careful observer can doubt it. This unity Christ enjoined; this oneness was the burden of his last prayer; and what the “Lord of all” both enjoined and prayed for must “in his due time” be realized.

THE END.



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